THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL VETERANS' CEMETERY IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL VETERANS' CEMETERY IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1984

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Phoenix, AZ.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9:30 a.m., at the State Capitol, hearing room 2, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, AZ 85007, Hon. Richard C. Shelby (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representative Shelby.

Also present: Hon. Bob Stump and Hon. John McCain, Representatives in Congress from the State of Arizona.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SHELBY

Mr. SHELBY. The committee will come to order.

The focus of this hearing will be on the need for a national veterans' cemetery in the State of Arizona.

The national cemetery traces its legal origins to the act of July 17, 1862, which authorized President Lincoln to purchase cemetery grounds for the interment of soldiers who have died while in service to their country.

This country has therefore recognized its moral obligation to care for those who have honorably served in our military forces since that time.

Under its present structure, the National Cemetery System will not be able to provide access to burial benefits for the veteran community to the degree which is consistent with the commitments, obligations, and responsibilities incumbent upon the Veterans' Administration.

The Veterans' Administration has made improvements to the National Cemetery System since it acquired jurisdiction of all federally owned cemeteries, with the exception of Arlington, in 1973.

One of these improvements authorized the Veterans' Administration to assist individual States in establishing, expanding and/or improving veterans' cemeteries.

The primary purpose of the program is to assist States to provide gravesites for veterans in those areas where national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy the burial needs of veterans. The program is intended to complement the VA National Cemetery System.

It is my understanding that the State of Arizona has the busiest State veterans' cemetery in the country, and there have been approximately 3,600 interments in the cemetery since April 1979.

As we all know, we have a rapidly aging veteran population. Veterans' deaths in the Nation will continue to increase annually. The projected peak period is estimated at between the years 2000 and 2015, at which time the age 65 and over veteran group will increase from its present level of about 4 million to about 9 million people.

We, therefore, must determine the direction of future expansion for our National Cemetery System.

Congressman McCain introduced legislation earlier this year, H.R. 5988, which would require the Veterans' Administration to submit plans in its budget identifying the areas of the country most in need of a national cemetery.

It is my understanding that Arizona would most probably fall within that category. He is to be commended for an excellent bill, and I think the subcommittee may be moving in that direction early next year.

Congressman Bob Stump has also pushed for legislation in this field. I had the privilege of eating a late breakfast with him this morning, and he is going to continue to exert all the influence he has along with Congressman G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery from Mississippi, chairman of the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

I welcome all of our witnesses this morning, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

[The statement of Mr. Shelby appears on p. 19.]

Mr. SHELBY. Our first witness will be the Honorable Bob Stump, a Member of Congress. He is no stranger to Arizona; I can tell that from walking through the State capitol with him.

Congressman Stump, your written remarks will be submitted for the record and will be there in complete form without objection, and I will leave the record open for a week for anything else that you might want to submit.

Congressman Stump.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOB STUMP, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. STUMP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do have a statement, but in the interest of time, I would like to just submit that and maybe make a very brief statement.

Mr. SHELBY. Without objection, you may do so.

Mr. STUMP. Let me, first of all, Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to come to Arizona to conduct your hearing. We are very grateful.

Many in this room have worked for years and years to try to get a national cemetery in Arizona, and I commend you and the committee's staff for taking time out of your very busy schedules to come to Arizona. I have worked diligently in the past and will continue to do so in the future to obtain a national cemetery in the State of Arizona, and anything that I can do on that behalf, I would be more than willing and happy to do.

I would simply just like to submit my statement for the record, if I may, Mr. Chairman, and if there are any questions later on, I would be happy to answer those questions.

[The statement of Mr. Stump appears on p. 19.]

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman Stump, you are familiar with this and you have pushed for this, and I know you have a large area here. The cemetery site was looked at yesterday. How critical is it for the State of Arizona? I know you have a tremendously exploding veterans' population.

Mr. STUMP. Well, I think the regional cemetery concept ought to serve all of Arizona, but for those of us in this area, it is 300 miles to the closest one, and that would be in Riverside, CA. That just isn't workable for all the families we have in Arizona.

I think something like 10,000 veterans a year are moving into my district alone, and it is very obvious that sooner or later we are going to have to address this problem. We should upgrade this to a full national cemetery, if possible.

Mr. SHELBY. Are you familiar with any cost estimates on what it would cost to do so?

Mr. STUMP. Since I have been on leave from the committee for a couple of years, I am not familiar with the cost estimate.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. STUMP. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next witness will be Congressman John McCain. He is, as you all know, a Member of the House of Representatives. He is no stranger to any of us here and, likewise, not to the people in the room.

Congressman McCain and Congressman Stump were instrumental in getting this hearing set out here and, John, I am glad to be here in Arizona with you today.

Without objection your written remarks will be submitted in the record. You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to share with you that Eldon Rudd sends his best regards to you, as well as Congressman Morris Udall and Congressman-elect Jim Kolbe. All of us welcome you. As you also know, Senator Barry Goldwater and Senator Dennis DeConcini have also been very interested in this issue.

We in Arizona are not a large delegation, and we work together on these issues, and we are very appreciative. I would like to express my own appreciation as well as for the other members of the delegation for your taking the time to come all the way from Alabama to address this critical issue with us.

I would like to submit my statement for the record, but I would also like to make some remarks, Mr. Chairman, because I think it is important that we say them, that we put the words in the record.

As you know, 10 years ago, the regional cemetery system was adopted and provided for the establishment of one large national cemetery in each of the 10 standard Federal regions.

Although the final cemetery in this system is scheduled for completion in 1986, the regional cemetery concept still fails to meet the growing needs of our aging veteran population, not only in Arizona, but in other parts of the United States.

It is estimated that 66 percent of the living veterans remain geographically inaccessible to an open national cemetery.

Our Nation's veteran population seems to be very fluid through migration.

Mr. Chairman, our VA hospital here is well able to cope with the numbers of veterans that come here in the summertime; however, in wintertime we have very overcrowded conditions and more and more of those veterans, as they grow older, are deciding to remain here rather than return from the places which they came just for vacation.

I realize that the possibility of singling out Arizona for a national cemetery is not good, and that is the reason why, and also in the interest of fairness, that I propose legislation which would provide for the expansion of the National Cemetery System on a priority basis.

By this, I mean that the Administrator of the VA will be required to rank at least the top 10 areas in the Nation which have the largest number of veterans, based on present and future demographic conditions, within an area that can practically be served by an open national cemetery.

This establishment-by-need concept seems to be the only equitable method for expansion of our National Cemetery System.

In light of the renewed emphasis on budgetary considerations, I feel that this expansion must be limited, selective, conservative, and must display the best efforts in prudent program development.

The VA should consider the desirability and feasibility of acquiring existing State cemeteries at no cost, such as the excellent facility that your staff visited yesterday, that we have in north Phoenix.

This would preclude the necessity of the VA to make fair market value purchases of land, whether it be interagency transfers or State-owned land purchases.

In all cases, site selection in these areas of greatest need must reflect minimal capital expenditures.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is particularly appropriate that you have been here following the celebration of Veterans' Day because I think we are seeing throughout this country a renewal of patriotism and a renewal of pride in our military, and also for our veterans who have provided for this Nation's peace and security.

I believe that one of the obligations that we have for our veterans is to provide them with a final resting place which is much in keeping as the honor we can bestow on them in death as we bestow on them while they are living.

I very much appreciate your being here to discuss this issue, and I thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. And I very much appreciate your remarks, and I hope you can stay here with us on the panel.

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. McCain appears on p. 20.]

Mr. SHELBY. Our next witness will be Mr. Dave Iwanski, who is here on behalf of Congressman Eldon Rudd.

Mr. Iwanski, your written testimony will be submitted for the record, without objection, and you can sum up your remarks, anything you choose to say on behalf of Congressman Rudd, whom I understand is not in town.

STATEMENT OF DAVE IWANSKI, ON BEHALF OF HON. ELDON RUDD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. IWANSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In summation, I would like to say that Congressman Rudd has supported in the past legislation for a national veterans' cemetery here in Arizona. The need is great.

As Congressman Stump mentioned, the closest national veterans' cemetery is over 300 miles away, in Riverside, CA.

Our State veterans' population since 1970 has grown from 250,000 to approximately 400,000, and by the year 2000 that figure is expected to double once again. The need is great.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear on behalf of the Congressman, and would greatly appreciate your consideration for a national veterans' cemetery here in Arizona.

[The statement of Congressman Rudd appears on p. 21.]

Mr. SHELBY. I want to add, on Congressman Eldon Rudd's behalf, he has testified before the subcommittee in Washington, DC, along with Congressman McCain, regarding his bill, and also on the need for a national cemetery here. He is very active in Washington, and I know, as you pointed out, he will work hard to see that this is a reality.

Thank you.

Mr. IWANSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the subcommittee.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next participant here will be Miss Judith Leiby. She will appear on behalf of Senator Dennis DeConcini.

STATEMENT OF JUDITH LEIBY, ON BEHALF OF HON. DENNIS DeCONCINI, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Ms. LEIBY. Good morning.

Mr. SHELBY. Your written remarks will be submitted in total for the record, without objection, and you may sum up anything you have to say on behalf of the Senator.

Ms. LEIBY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank the distinguished members of the committee. I have worked in this area for the Senator for the 4 years that he has been on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and this is a project which is very close to the Senator's heart.

He has introduced this legislation in the past two sessions of Congress, and we are very pleased in this last session to be joined by Mr. McCain, Mr. Stump, and all the other members of the delegation.

I don't think it is necessary for me to point out all the demographics of the State. We feel that we do have an unusual and unique situation here.

For 40 years our veterans have worked to bring a cemetery into reality, and we feel very strongly that they should be honored in death as they have been honored in life, and Arizona in its totality, total population, feels that way because of the support from our State officials. And I would like to thank this committee for bringing this issue to the forefront.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Senator DeConcini appears on p. 21.]

Mr. SHELBY. We appreciate your appearing on behalf of Senator DeConcini, and I am familiar with his work on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and I know he is going to push again in the new Congress for this reality.

Ms. LEIBY. I can assure you of that. We will be meeting with the delegation very soon.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Ms. LEIBY. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next witnesses, will be Hon. William De Long, State senator, State of Arizona.

Is Mr. De Long here? He is not here.

[The statement of Mr. De Long appears on p. 22.]

Mr. SHELBY. Hon. Jim Hartdegen, Arizona State representative. Mr. Hartdegen, any written remarks that you have will be submitted and made part of the record, without objection, and if you want to add to that in the next week or two, we will keep the record open.

STATEMENT OF HON. JIM HARTDEGEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN THE ARIZONA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HARTDEGEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. That will be part of this field hearing.

Mr. HARTDEGEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your coming to Arizona and the hard work that you have put in, and our Arizona delegation. I will just make a few remarks.

We are very fortunate in Arizona, sir, to have a very strong and unified veterans' group with all of the major veterans' organizations involved. They started a number of years ago to have an Arizona cemetery which would turn in, hopefully, to a national cemetery.

I am kind of a Johnny-come-lately in Arizona, in the last couple of years, but we feel very strongly about it, and I think it would be very nice if Arizona could obtain a national cemetery.

Not only do we have older veterans coming into the State, but we have a lot of Vietnam-era veterans moving into the State, possibly because of the good climate, but anything you can do, I would appreciate, and I know the veterans in the State would appreciate; and anything that I can do through my office here in the capital of Phoenix, please feel free to call on me, and I will give you all the help I can.

But we do have experts here, and I will give up my time so they can get into the nitty-gritty of the program.

Mr. SHELBY. Well, we appreciate your appearing in your capacity as a State representative of the State of Arizona and showing us

you are interested in working with your Members of Congress to bring this about.

Mr. HARTDEGEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. Chairman, could I speak briefly?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. McCain.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. Hartdegen is a Vietnam veteran and is chairman of our Vietnam Veterans Association here, and has worked very hard in the State of Arizona on our veterans' issues, particularly the Vietnam veterans.

Mr. Hartdegen, could you give us an idea of the mood of the State legislature in trying to transfer from a State cemetery to a national one?

Mr. HARTDEGEN. I believe the mood, Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCain, is very favorable.

We had a little piece of legislation last year to enhance our State cemetery, and out of the 60 House members, all 60 members signed on the legislation. So I think the mood of the State legislature, at least the House, is very favorable, and will do anything and everything possible to see that come about.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you very much.

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. Stump, do you have any questions?

Mr. STUMP. No.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next witness is Mr. Paul Bannai. He is Chief Memorial Affairs Director of the Veterans' Administration in Washington, DC.

He is, I might state, a man who is very much up on the problems of the VA Cemetery System in his official capacity, and I have to add further that he has traveled this country, because I have traveled it some, holding hearings and looking at sites, and I believe everywhere I have been, like the gentleman in front of him, Mr. Bannai has already been there one or two times.

Paul, welcome to the committee hearing here in Phoenix, AZ.

STATEMENT OF PAUL BANNAI, CHIEF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BANNAI. Thank you very much, Mr. Shelby, Mr. McCain, Mr. Stump.

We now have 109 national cemeteries in the Veterans' Administration under the Department of Memorial Affairs. I head that Department, and as the chairman, Mr. Shelby, has said, my endeavor during that time has been to increase the number of cemeteries to take care of those veterans throughout our System.

I have been able to accomplish that to some degree by reopening cemeteries and by opening new cemeteries.

I do not have a prepared statement for the committee, but I will at least read a statement so that at some later date, if somebody said, "You made a statement before the committee which was not true," then you will have this and I will be willing to answer any questions on my own.

Mr. SHELBY. You may proceed.

Mr. BANNAI. Fine. Of course, it is an honor for me to be here today.

On this bill which was introduced by Mr. McCain, the Veterans' Administration has not taken an official position at the present time.

In fact, we have really not had a chance to review it in depth, and I can tell you the reason why later, but I would like to share with you some of my personal feelings on what I believe to be the bill's intent, and I think some of that was explained.

National cemeteries should be, in the future, located to serve the greatest number of veterans possible.

I have supported this concept and I still support this concept and believe that it should be the basis for the Veterans' Administration's long-term planning.

We anticipate, as Mr. Shelby said, that in the National Cemetery System interments will be increasing over the next two to three decades. We have achieved the regional concept under which a large national cemetery has been established in each 1 of the 10 standard Federal regions. The final one will be completed soon, in Alabama.

This was a major step in improving the geographic distribution of gravesites throughout the United States. Any expansions of the National Cemetery System to meet the future requirements, however, should be based primarily on demographic need, which this bill addresses.

We know from experience in running the cemetery system that the location of a cemetery has a very big bearing on how many veterans will use it. So, if we are to build any new cemeteries, it would only make sense to put them where the greatest number of veterans will be served.

Regarding a study of the national cemetery needs, my Department, the Department of Memorial Affairs, has drafted a report along these lines, and at the present time it is over at the Office of Management and Budget for their consideration.

OMB has indicated that they would be reviewing the national cemetery policy in connection with the fiscal year 1986 budget process.

I would like to commend the citizens of Arizona on the beautiful State cemetery that they have here which was established, as you know, with assistance from a grant from our Department. The VA has been very proud to participate in this cemetery as well as other cemeteries through the State cemetery grant program.

This concludes my formal statement. If there are any questions, I would be very happy to answer them, and I will leave this for your records.

[The statement of Mr. Bannai appears on p. 22.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. Stump.

Mr. STUMP. No questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. McCain?

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Bannai. We appreciate very much the work that you are doing on this whole issue, and I was certainly happy to hear you say that your philosophy is to serve the greatest number of vets possible, as far as our cemetery is concerned.

It is my understanding that the reason for the study that is now over and has been at the Office of Management and Budget for the last several months is that, although the regional system itself was good to a degree, there had to be further evaluations of the concept as to whether we would just continue with more regional systems or change the program so that, as you mentioned, they go where the greatest need is concerned.

Was that the reason for the study?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, the study was to find out whether or not, after putting the regional cemetery system in place, they did actually meet the needs. As you know, the regional concept was a compromise, and it was made upon the basis or wisdom of Congress that we could not establish a cemetery in every State.

However, there was a decision to start up a cemetery in each standard Federal region so that we would take care of that geographic area. And a result of this geographic rather then demographic orientation, some cemeteries, in our estimation, were not serving the public as effectively as others.

So we did a study and we found that the regional cemeteries that we put into the geographic center of an area without considering demographic factors did not serve the veteran population as effectively as we would like if they were not too far from where the veterans lived.

As I said, we have taken the study over to OMB because we cannot release that without their concurrence and they said that they would look at it, "When we are considering the 1986 budget."

There are quite a number of locations where we have a great number of veterans that are not served by any cemetery, State or national. This would include northern California, Seattle-Tacoma, Chicago, and Dallas-Fort Worth.

Mr. MCCAIN. As you said, we cannot put a national cemetery in every State. Then we would have to explore the different options for best service.

Can you think of a better scenario or a better set of guidelines to use than the areas that we determine would be of the greatest need in the future?

Mr. BANNAI. I think it is a perfectly good solution, and that is why we support the concept. We have always felt that is the way we should go.

We have been unable to do that in view of the congressional interest which created the regional concept. We felt that under the mandate that we had it was essential that we complete the regional cemeteries. With the selection of Alabama, that completed all our tasks under the regional concept.

Mr. MCCAIN. Can you give the committee a little guess or an idea as to how much it really costs to go from nothing to set up a national cemetery?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, you have to understand that at our national cemeteries, the concept is to provide for longer term needs of the veteran.

I would say that for our regional cemeteries, it takes in excess of $4 to $5 million by the time we are ready to dedicate that facility for use.

Mr. McCAIN. A substantial amount of the expenditure would be for the acquisition of the land which, obviously, would vary from region to region?

Mr. BANNAI. Land acquisition is generally a substantial part of the cost for developing cemeteries.

Mr. McCAIN. Would it then be a more viable option to look at State cemeteries which could be converted to national cemeteries as a cost-saving measure? Would that be a more attractive way than just going out and try to acquire land?

Mr. BANNAI. It could be, but the Veterans' Administration has not acquired land at a cost. So far, all the land which we have for our national cemeteries and the land used for expansion of our cemeteries has been donated land from Federal, municipal governments, or from private individuals. It has been a policy not to purchase land.

Mr. McCAIN. Do you have any problems with the conversion of a State cemetery to a national cemetery?

Mr. BANNAI. I only see problems insofar as the legislation goes. You have created the State Cemetery Grant Program by legislative action, and we have tendered one-half of the funds from Federal funds to establish the cemetery and the citizens of Arizona have contributed 50 percent.

Now, hearing the legislator from Arizona saying that he is willing to give away half of that to the Federal Government, that is fine; I just wonder what the implications will be with the other State grant cemeteries we have in the system.

We are perfectly willing to operate them if mandated to do so. We have very good people, a good training program, and very good cemeteries.

Mr. McCAIN. I want to thank you again for your deep interest and abiding concern on this issue, and I very much appreciated the opportunity of working with you in the past and look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. Bannai, I have several questions.

Have any cost estimates been done on the Arizona cemetery, if it were to be taken over by the Veterans' Administration in converting it totally to a VA cemetery?

Mr. BANNAI. No, I think the cost would be minimal. I think the expenditure so far, and I think Mr. Countryman and his staff will present information to that effect, has been about $297,000 which went into the initial phase of it.

There has been a further request, and I don't know if the rest of it was funded, so that the combined amount would be $800,000 or a million dollars put into the project. That is a very minimal amount as far as a good cemetery goes with an active interment rate.

I don't think we would do too much more. We would, of course, change the gate, perhaps put some improvements in to assure that the standards are the same as at other national cemeteries.

I have looked at most of the State veterans' cemeteries, whether they are in Maine, Connecticut, Montana, or New Jersey, and they are all very well designed and well-run cemeteries.

Mr. SHELBY. Have you found from demographic studies that Arizona is in fact a real growth area as far as the veterans population moving in?

Mr. BANNAI. Yes.

Mr. SHELBY. Right here in the Sun Belt?

Mr. BANNAI. Very much so, but this is not to imply that because it is a national cemetery it would be better than a State grant cemetery. I question whether or not that makes a difference, and maybe the veterans who will follow me will address themselves to that.

We have, in the State of Hawaii, county-operated cemeteries on the outside islands, which do 90 percent of the burials. Many States are extremely proud of their veterans' cemeteries and are funding them very well.

Mr. SHELBY. As far as this cemetery here in Arizona is concerned, was the land acquisition going to be free here or was the State trying to exact some money for the cemetery, or do you know?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, in the grant, generally in all States, we allow 50 percent of their portion of the 50 percent grant to be for the land.

Mr. SHELBY. OK.

Mr. BANNAI. So, if it is State land, they will get one-half the credit.

Mr. SHELBY. OK.

Mr. BANNAI. I presume in this particular instance, the State had already acquired the land.

Mr. SHELBY. OK.

Any other questions from the panel? Thank you, Mr. Bannai.

Mr. BANNAI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. One other question: When do you think OMB will turn loose this report you have talked about, if they will?

Mr. BANNAI. The last letter that we received said that when the 1986 budget is considered, they would review our report.

Mr. SHELBY. Do you think the Arizona congressional delegation, made up of Senator Goldwater and the Members seated here, with their ties to the administration, could move that report?

Mr. BANNAI. Well, it would be very helpful.

Mr. SHELBY. I believe they could.

Mr. MCCAIN. Maybe Senator Goldwater could.

Mr. BANNAI. It is a report based upon data we have collected.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. BANNAI. Thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. At this time, I would like to recognize someone in the audience who will not testify today, but is a very important person to Arizona veterans. Mr. Roger Brickey. He is director of the Phoenix VA. You have some other people with you, do you not?

Mr. BRICKEY. I have nobody with me this morning.

Mr. SHELBY. We are glad to have you with us this morning.

Mr. BRICKEY. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. We will proceed with the testimony. The next group, and we will take them one at a time, is Mr. Richard Countryman, director of the Arizona Veterans' Service Commission. He is accom-

panied by Mr. John Evers, Mr. Frederick Hintz, and Mr. Louis Blakely.

Mr. Countryman, you will be doing the talking, right?

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. Any written statement that you have, sir, will be submitted in the record in its entirety.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD L. COUNTRYMAN, DIRECTOR, ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE COMMISSION, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHN EVERS, FREDERICK HINTZ, AND LOUIS G. BLAKELY

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We really appreciate your being here today, and we also appreciate Mr. McCain and Mr. Stump being here with you.

I would like to initially say that the veterans of Arizona are very, very fortunate in that our congressional delegation, both Senators, all five of our Representatives, have supported us very handsomely in all matters of veterans affairs, and in particular in the issue of the veterans' national cemetery here in Arizona.

I have submitted a written statement. I would like to add to it, or reemphasize if there is any one issue among the veterans of Arizona, that is the No. 1 issue, it is the acquisition of a national cemetery in Arizona

To go on with that just a moment, when the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery was established, it was established primarily and completely with the intention that it become a national cemetery.

I am sure that—I certainly cannot speak for our legislature, but I am sure of their intention also, the intention, I am quite sure, all levels of government and veterans' organizations in Arizona has been that that cemetery became a national cemetery.

In my written statement, I attached a copy of the master plan for the cemetery. On the inside of that folder, in the section designated "Design and Administrative Objectives," the first sentence:

"To develop a national shrine," to me, a national shrine does mean a national veterans' cemetery.

[The statement of Mr. Countryman appears on p. 23.]

Mr. SHELBY. We appreciate your appearing before us today.

Congressman Stump, do you have any questions?

Mr. STUMP. I have no questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman McCain?

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Countryman, I appreciate very much the hard work you have done for the Arizona veterans and your tireless efforts are appreciated by all veterans in the State.

Mr. Bannai brought up a point where he mentioned that in Hawaii some people prefer a State or a county cemetery as opposed to a national cemetery.

Could you elaborate a little bit as to why it is important for Arizona veterans to have our own national cemetery?

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCain, I will certainly attempt to.

In answering that, I would like to state that, as I have said, the desire for a national cemetery here in Arizona is at least of 40 years' duration and possibly longer.

Ninety percent of the veterans that we inter in our cemetery have been—have spoke to either myself or somebody in the Arizona Veterans' Service Commission or somebody in the veterans' organizations, leaders of the veterans' organizations, and 90 percent of them, while they are still living, have said, "Are you sure this is going to be a national cemetery?"

I refer to, in my statement, the fact that many of our veterans' leaders are not here today because they are interred in that cemetery.

Perhaps a part of our dedication, a large part of it, to completing that task is because we have made a pledge to those veterans that are already interred there, that that will be a national cemetery.

I am aware that veterans in other States, in other States that have State veterans' cemeteries, don't share our desire.

This is perhaps a unique situation in Arizona. I know the Director of Veterans' Affairs in the State of Maryland very well, John Eaton, who is a fine man. They run five State cemeteries.

I think they might object to any thought of it being made national cemeteries, and some of the others, I am sure, might feel that same way, but here in Arizona, this is a unique situation.

I don't know—certainly it wasn't Mr. Bannai—but someone at the outset of this led the residents of Arizona to believe that by establishing a State cemetery they were on the road to a national cemetery, and then after it was accomplished, it seems like the rules changed.

I am not pointing the finger at anybody. I don't know. I have never found the guilty person, but somewhere there is someone.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. Countryman, you deal with a great frequency with the Governor's office as well as the State legislators on a variety of veterans' issues.

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. McCAIN. Do you feel that if this legislation was enacted and Arizona became eligible to move from a State to a national cemetery, would we receive the active cooperation from the State legislature and from the Governor's office, in your opinion?

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCain, I certainly can't pledge support of either one, but it certainly is my strong belief that both the legislature and the Governor's office would be very happy to hand the keys of the cemetery over to the national cemetery system lock, stock and barrel; and again, at times that I have testified before the State legislature seeking to undertake to improve the cemetery, and we are very grateful for the matching funds from the Federal VA in doing that, and the times that I have discussed it with the Governor's office and the Governor himself to sign these bills to further improve the cemetery, no one, including the Governor nor anyone I have talked to has any thought other than this ultimately becoming a national cemetery and virtually saying, "Here it is."

Mr. McCAIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Mr. SHELBY. Thank you. Mr. Countryman, I think you alluded to your written testimony, and I assume you have submitted it for the record?

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Yes, sir, I have.

Mr. SHELBY. We will keep the record open for any additional comments you might make.

Mr. COUNTRYMAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next panel—and we will start with Commander Kay Compton, Arizona American Legion. Mrs. Compton, your written testimony will be submitted for the record—in its totality, without objection. You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF COMMANDER KAY COMPTON, ARIZONA AMERICAN LEGION

Ms. COMPTON. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman McCain, and thank you for having this meeting and coming here to hear us out. Most of the things have already been presented.

The American Legion has financially supported this for 40 years, and I might state that everybody has remarked about these aging veterans, and I guess my hair indicates that I might be one of them.

I am also a native of Arizona. I have seen Phoenix when it was a little bitty town. I grew up here and have watched it grow into a huge retirement center. As a matter of fact, the entire State of Arizona has become a retirement center, and that is one reason that we desperately need a Federal cemetery.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Compton appears on p. 30.]

Mr. SHELBY. And the American Legion stands foursquare behind it; is that right?

Ms. COMPTON. That is right, 199 percent, if you can go that far.

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman Stump, do you have any questions?

Mr. STUMP. No, sir, I have no questions.

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman McCain?

Mr. MCCAIN. Ms. Compton, do you feel that this is, if not the most important issue, the most visible issue for Arizona veterans?

Ms. COMPTON. I certainly do. It is the biggest problem that we have. We have a small cemetery in Flagstaff, and they set aside a small area for the veterans, which is already filled up. They added another section, and it is rapidly filling up.

If we had a Federal or a national cemetery, these people would be happy to be there with their comrades.

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mrs. Compton.

Mr. SHELBY. Do you feel if it were a national cemetery it would have a stronger connotation for the veterans?

Ms. COMPTON. I believe it would. Several of our retirees from Flagstaff went to Arlington, at the time there were spaces there, so I am sure they would be more than happy to be here in Phoenix.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Ms. COMPTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next witness will be Mr. George Ken Mead, representing the Arizona Veterans of Foreign Wars. Mr. Mead, welcome to the subcommittee.

Mr. MEAD. Thank you, Mr. Shelby.

Mr. SHELBY. Your written testimony, as I have indicated to others, will be submitted for the record in its totality, without objection, and you may proceed and present any oral remarks you want to say on behalf of the cemetery.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE KEN MEAD, ARIZONA VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Mr. MEAD. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Stump, the Commander of Arizona, Don Esposito, sends his regards. He was retained in Tucson and could not come up.

I would like to read this:

You have been told many times of the importance of a veterans' cemetery in each State. I realize, looking from a regional standpoint, however, we are addressing the need for one in Arizona.

I would like to approach this problem from our viewpoint and, by the way, I am also a native of Arizona. I grew up in Yuma, and born in Prescott, where the only cemetery is we have now, which is full.

We, being one of the largest States in area located in the Sunbelt, and having one of the largest percentages of veteran population, we feel the need is even greater in Arizona, when we were bypassed so many times in the past for a cemetery, we started looking at the possibility of a veterans' cemetery funded by other means.

Conversations as late as 1977 with the Veterans' Administration—and I don't want to point any fingers or mention any names—but conversations were with me and they assured us that if we allocated land for a State cemetery, some sort of arrangement could be worked out for this to become a national cemetery.

All the national specifications were met, and the State cemetery was realized in 1978.

This, however, became a burden on the State, as many veterans being interred is now 60 to 80 veterans per month interring in our cemetery.

As I stated, many veterans are retiring to Arizona, and many of them wish to be interred in a Federal cemetery in addition to the veterans already here.

It seems to us the U.S. Government should be a little sensitive to our needs here in Arizona and as well as other States' needs in this matter.

Just because we are small in population doesn't mean our needs are less than other States with a larger population. Our opinion out here is just this: The regional concept, no matter how good it is on paper, it just doesn't fit our needs out here in the Southwest.

To traverse hundreds of miles for an interment in another State is one thing, but to traverse those same hundreds of miles to that same State each time a visit is made to the gravesite of a loved one is just asking too much.

We veterans in Arizona put forth just as much individual effort for our country as other veterans in other States.

So I ask you, don't slight us. I hope you can see our side of this problem and award us our rightful position and award us a national cemetery in Arizona.

Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. How many burials, average per month, did you just state?

Mr. MEAD. 60 to 80.

Mr. SHELBY. In the present cemetery?

Mr. MEAD. That is right, in our State cemetery.

Mr. SHELBY. And it will accelerate?

Mr. MEAD. It will accelerate, Mr. Shelby, tremendously. All the core samples and everything were made, and they were all good core and it seems like somebody left us out after we got one, and that was the veterans' position in Arizona.

We want a veterans' cemetery, national. We want to be recognized as national, and I am sure Mr. McCain and Mr. Stump will back me up on this. We want a national cemetery.

Mr. SHELBY. I would like to see you get it.

Congressman Stump, do you have any questions or comments?

Mr. STUMP. No, no questions.

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman McCain?

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. Chairman, Past Commander Mead, I think it is important, and I think you understand that Congressman Stump, Congressman Rudd, Senator DeConcini and others have for years had legislation in to do exactly as you want, and that is to convert the State cemetery to a national cemetery.

The reason why I have sought another track here was so that we could make an argument not just for Arizona but for the needs of veterans nationwide.

Mr. Chairman, I am sure you are aware that there are only a few States in America today that are going to experience an increase in the number of veterans in the next few years. Among them are Florida, Nevada, and Arizona and I am sure that there are a couple of others.

So, I believe that we can address this issue not only on the needs of the State of Arizona, but also on the needs of the veterans throughout the country who are shifting their population from the Northwest, Northeast, and Midwest to the Sun Belt States, and by prioritizing those States which are going to have the largest increases in veterans' population. We will then be able to make the State of Arizona eligible on what I think would be perceived—I hope would be perceived—as a fairness one for veterans all over this country, because I think, as Mr. Bannai mentioned, we can't build or afford in these days of financial austerity, a national cemetery for every State in the Union.

Therefore, we would have to look at some sort of priority, and the information that I have falls well within the top 10 States in the Union who will be eligible for a national cemetery on the basis of need.

I hope that maybe this method of attacking the issue will bring us some success.

I also appreciate very much the fact that Congressman Shelby has taken such an interest in our Arizona concerns. Would you care to comment on that?

Mr. MEAD. Well, only the fact that from the standpoint that Veterans of Foreign Wars have met with both of you in Washington and with Senator DeConcini and Senator Goldwater and with all the delegation, not leaving any of them out, past and present, and all of them have been sympathetic to us.

They are veterans and they are sympathetic, and I know they want a cemetery in Arizona, a national cemetery, as much as we do, and if this method or approach works, fine, but we want to see something work.

Mr. MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. MEAD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Yes, sir.

Our next witness will be Comdr. Mario Cattani, Arizona Disabled American Veterans Organization.

STATEMENT OF MARIO CATTANI, ARIZONA DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Mr. CATTANI. Thank you.

I would like to add to that in regards to past commander of the VFW, Ken Mead, just said we have been working on this cemetery for the past 40 years. I understand from what Mr. Bannai says with regard to demographic need; personally, I am looking at it from a human need.

We in Arizona have some 17 Congressional Medal of Honor recipients that have been buried in commercial cemeteries, one, for example, also in Arlington Cemetery, Ira Hayes, the Indian hero who helped raise the flag in Iwo Jima.

I am sure it is not fair to his family that they have to go to Arlington Cemetery in order to pay respect to their loved one.

I also feel that here in Arizona we have been working hard and we have been told that eventually this is going to be a national cemetery and somehow or some way it has always gotten away from us.

Hopefully, this time you will make it a reality, and as Dick Countryman says, I thank you for coming over here and listening to our plea in regards to a cemetery. It is needed. It is a must.

And thank you very, very much.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you for your testimony.

Congressman Stump, do you have any statement or questions?

Mr. STUMP. No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHELBY. Congressman McCain?

Mr. MCCAIN. No, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CATTANI. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. I would like to submit for the record a written statement of Senator Bill De Long and make it part of the record in its entirety, because I know he supports the concept of what Congressman McCain and Congressman Stump are trying to do with the rest of the Arizona congressional delegation.

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I appreciate all of you testifying here today to show your interest in a Federal cemetery here in the State of Arizona.

I want to thank, again, Congressman Stump and Congressman McCain, for being with me and urging me to come out here and hold this hearing. What we take back with us will be the written testimony and oral testimony, and what we see and what our staff sees while we are here. I do want to say once again that when Mr. Bannai comes out, it is a serious situation, and I believe the Arizona congressional delegation, starting with Senator Goldwater and working with the House Members, can get the job done.

I will do everything I can in working with your delegation to see that it becomes reality. It is not going to be easy. It is not going to happen overnight, but I think you are in an area that is deserving.

This will conclude our hearing. Thank you for being here.

[Whereupon, at 10:30 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Statement of Congressman Shelby, Chairman, Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs

The subcommittee will come to order.

The focus of the hearing this morning will be on the need for a national veterans' cemetery in the State of Arizona.

The national cemetery system traces its legal origins to the act of July 17, 1862, which authorized President Lincoln to purchase cemetery grounds for the interment of soldiers dying in service to their country. This country has therefore recognized its moral obligation to caring for those who have honorably served in our military forces since that time.

Under its present structure, the national cemetery system will not be able to provide access to burial benefits for the veteran community to the degree which is consistent with the commitments, obligations, and responsibilities incumbent upon the Veterans' Administration.

The Veterans' Administration has made improvements to the national cemetery system since it acquired jurisdiction of all federally owned cemeteries, with the exception of Arlington, in 1973.

One of these improvements authorized the Veterans' Administration to assist individual States in establishing, expanding and/or improving veterans cemeteries. The primary purpose of the program is to assist States to provide gravesites for veterans in those areas where national cemeteries cannot fully satisfy the burial needs of veterans. The program is intended to complement the VA national cemetery system.

It is my understanding that the State of Arizona has the busiest such State veterans cemetery in the country and there have been approximately 3,600 interments in the cemetery since April 1979.

As we all know, we have a rapidly aging veteran population. Veterans deaths in the Nation will continue to increase annually. The projected peak period is estimated at between the years 2000 and 2015, at which time the age 65 and over veteran group will increase from its present level of about 4 million to about 9 million people.

We therefore must determine the direction of future expansion for our national cemetery system. Congressman McCain introduced legislation earlier this year, H.R. 5988, which would require the Veterans' Administration to submit plans in its budget identifying the areas of the country most in need for a national cemetery. It is my understanding that Arizona would most probably fall within that category. He is to be commended for an excellent bill, and I think the subcommittee may be moving in that direction early next year.

I want to welcome all of our witnesses this morning. I look forward to receiving your testimony.

Our first witness is the Honorable John McCain who invited the subcommittee to come to Phoenix. I appreciate the invitation. You may proceed whenever you are ready.

Statement of Hon. Bob Stump

Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking time to come to Phoenix today to hear testimony on an issue of paramount importance to veterans and their families in Arizona.

For quite some time, we have been working to get a national veteran's cemetery in Arizona, because, quite frankly, the Regional Cemetery Concept is not meeting the needs of our veterans and their families. We in Arizona have one of the fastest growing veterans population in the country, second only, I believe, to Florida. In

fact, in just the eight years I have been in Congress and working on this effort, the Arizona veterans' population has grown 21%, from 308,000 to 383,000. And, there is no doubt in my mind that many of the new residents, as well as most other Arizona veterans, want to be interred close to home, enabling their families to visit their gravesite.

While Arizona veterans are grateful for the assistance received through the State Cemetery Program, the fact remains that they, and their families, are approximately 300 miles from the closest national cemetery. For these reasons, I cosponsored legislation in the last Congress to establish a national veterans cemetery in Arizona, and to expand and improve the national cemetery system to better meet the needs of all veterans.

Mr. Chairman, the Regional Concept may make systematic sense to VA officials in Washington, but it does a disservice to those veterans not within a reasonable driving distance from a national cemetery. When the 99th Congress convenes in January, I urge the Subcommittee to act favorably upon legislation to designate a national cemetery in Arizona; and to also review the entire regional approach to insure that the needs of our veterans are met.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Statement of Congressman John McCain

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and members of your staff to our great State of Arizona. I would also like to thank you for taking the time and interest to hold these congressional hearings on the overall national cemetery system.

As you know, ten years ago the regional cemetery system was adopted and provided for the establishment of one large national cemetery in each of the ten standard Federal regions. Although the final cemetery in this system is scheduled for completion in 1986, the regional cemetery concept still fails to meet the growing needs of our aging veteran population. The veterans of Arizona are subject to this unfortunate disadvantage in that those wishing to be buried in a national cemetery must utilize the Riverside, California, National Cemetery, some 400 miles away. This scenario is certainly not unique from other protions of our Nation. In fact, it is estimated that 66% of all living veterans remain unreasonably accessable to an open national cemetery.

Our Nation's veterans population seems to be very fluid through migration, generally to the Sunbelt States, and those areas which have historically proved health related relief for the aging. Here in Arizona, for example, we have seen a dramatic increase in the veteran population, evidenced by the surge in the health care workload at the veterans' facilities. In fact, Arizona's 400,000 veterans are sure to double by the year 2000, therefore creating an overwhelming burden.

Realizing the possibility of singling out Arizona for a national cemetery is quite slim, I have proposed legislation which would provide for the expansion of the national cemetery system on a priority basis. By this I mean that the Administrator of the VA will be required to rank at least the top ten areas in the Nation which have the largest number of veterans, based on present and future demographic conditions, within an area that can practically be served by an open national cemetery. This astablishment by need concept seems to be the only equitable method for expansion.

In light of the renewed emphasis on budgetary considerations, I feel that this expansion must be limited, selective, conservative and must display the best efforts n prudent program development. The VA should consider the desireability and feasibility of acquiring existing State cemeteries at no cost, such as the excellent facility we have in North Phoenix. This would preclude the necessity of the VA to make fair market value purchases of land, whether it be interagency transfers of State owned land purchases. In all cases, site selection in these areas of greatest need must reflect minimal capital expensitures.

Mr. Chairman, I feel it is the obligation of us, as Members of Congress, to ensure the commitment to out honorable veterans. There is a certain comfort to the veteran in knowing that he will have the honor of being laid to rest in a national cemetery. I think we can all agree that the present day system does not provide this assurance.

Statement of Hon. Eldon Rudd

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I wish to extend my appreciation and the appreciation of all Arizona veterans for your thoughtful

decision to come here today to review Arizona's need for a national veterans cemetery.

Indeed that need is great. Since 1970, the number of veterans in Arizona has almost doubled, from 250,000 to about 400,000 today. The State's veteran population is expected to double again by the year 2000.

Nevertheless, despite the rapidly growing number of veterans living in Arizona, there is no veterans cemetery in the State. In fact, the closest national cemetery with available space is more than 300 miles away, in Riverside, California—an extremely long distance for families of those buried in a national cemetery to have to travel to visit their loved ones.

As I mentioned in my testimony before this distinguished subcommittee on October 2nd, the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery near Cave Creek can address this overwhelming need. It is an excellent candidate for inclusion in the national cemetery system. The site includes about 836 acres of raw desert land, and its terrain suits the requirements of the national cemetery system.

During the 98th Congress, I introduced legislation—with the support of the entire Arizona congressional delegation, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars--to establish the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery as a national veterans cemetery. I will reintroduce that legislation when Congress reconvenes in January.

Veterans who have served honorably in defense of our Nation have earned every right and opportunity to be buried in a national veterans cemetery within a reasonable distance of their homes. I urge your favorable consideration of the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery for inclusion in the national cemetery system. I look forward to working closely with you to achieve this objective.

Statement of Hon. Dennis DeConcini

Mr. Chairman, members of the Arizona Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs, I am pleased to be extended the courtesy of presenting testimony on the issue of a national cemetery for the State of Arizona. I sincerely regret that scheduling commitments precluded me from presenting my testimony in person.

As the members of the subcommittee are aware, the establishment of a national cemetery in the State of Arizona has been a matter of deep concern to this Senator for many years. It has been my privilege, along with other members of the Arizona congressional delegation, to introduce legislation to achieve this goal in the last two sessions of Congress. Unfortunately, this legislation has not received favorable consideration by Congress to date.

It is evident that my concern is shared not only by the veteran community of Arizona, but also by the elected officials of the State who have clearly demonstrated their support by providing the necessary funding for Arizona to participate in the State cemetery grant program. This cost-sharing program has resulted in the establishment of the Arizona State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Although everyone involved is grateful to be able to address the immediate needs for burial of veterans in Arizona, we strongly feel that these veterans are deserving of the same treatment as their former comrades in arms who happen to have lived in areas in close proximity to a national cemetery.

Despite the good intentions of the VA regional concept for the creation of national cemeteries, I do not believe it has achieved its desired objectives of regional balance. There are currently 58 open cemeteries, 25 of which are located in only seven States. The remaining 33 cemeteries are distributed among the other 31 States and Puerto Rico. More disturbing still is the fact that 19 States have no national cemetery or only one which is closed, which is the case in Arizona. A recent VA report on the cemetery system clearly addresses the shortcomings of existing policy and outlines the discriminatory practices that have resulted.

All of us presenting testimony today are, I believe, in agreement that current VA policy has not met the unusual needs of Arizona veterans. In order to better plead my case for a national cemetery in this State, I would like to bring the subcommittee's attention to the demographics of the veteran population in Arizona. The Arizona veteran population is rapidly approaching the half-million mark in a total population of just over three million. Additionally, Arizona is one of only three States which continues to experience a growth of the veteran population while that population is declining in other States, many of which now have a national cemetery. The largest single group of Arizona veterans is that of the World War II veteran. With the average age of the World War II veteran rapidly approaching 65, it is clear that

many Arizona veterans will have need of their entitled burial benefit in the not too distant future.

Putting aside the very natural desire of veterans to be buried close to loved ones, it is unrealistic to expect the surviving family to travel over 300 miles to bury their father or husband as is the case in Arizona with the nearest national cemetery being located in Riverside, California. Unless veterans are buried in close proximity to loved ones, surviving family members are effectively precluded from honoring their deceased relatives on such special occasions such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day. I am certain that is not the intent of the Department of Memorial Affairs, but it has been the result.

Arizona veterans have labored for more that 40 years to realize the dream of a national veterans cemetery in which they may be interred and honored as they so richly deserve. The sacrifices and hardships which they and their families endured during times of conflict cannot and should not be overlooked at the time of death.

In conclusion, I would like to share with the members of the committee an excerpt from a letter recently received in my office from a veteran's widow—and I quote—"they gave their lives for this country, and for the freedom and safety of all Americans. So how in the world can you ask them for more? They fought for this land. therefore, they should have a piece of this land for their final resting place . . . to ask you or beg for this commitment for our veterans is an insult . . ."

I urge this committee to carefully consider this matter and to bring to the full House of Representatives recommendations in keeping with the debt we all owe to these brave men and women who kept the faith with us during their trial by fire and who are, rightfully, now asking that we do the same.

Statement of Senator Bill De Long

As a member of the Arizona State Senate, I am pleased to be able to testify today before this Subcommittee.

The veterans of Arizona have a long record of striving to convince the Congress to establish a national cemetery in Arizona. I believe their desire is a legitimate request that should be granted.

The idea of interring veterans in a national cemetery over 400 miles from their homes simply isn't reasonable.

At the present time, Arizona is one of the fastest growing states with a population of 3,028,000, 13% of that population are veterans. By the year 2000, our population will be 4,710,000, and 1,000,000 veterans. Arizona has the highest percentage of senior citizens moving to this State. I believe these facts alone justify the establishment of a national cemetery here in Central Arizona.

The federal government did encourage the establishment of a state-owned veterans cemetery as being the surest way to establish a national cemetery. Every bit of development and operational money invested in the cemetery has been based on the belief that it would ultimately be a national cemetery.

In conclusion, let me simply say that the 400,000 veterans of Arizona, and State government in Arizona are in complete agreement that the Arizona Memorial Cemetery, Phoenix, Arizona, was developed and is being developed for the sole purpose of establishing a national cemetery.

Statement of Paul T. Bannai, Chief Memorial Affairs Director, Veterans' Administration

It is an honor for me to be here today. Although the Veterans' Administration has not taken an official position on this bill, and we have not really had time to review it in depth, I would like to share with you my personal feelings on what I believe to be the bill's intent. This, as I read it, is that national cemeteries should in future be located to serve the greatest number of veterans possible.

I support this concept, and believe that it should be the basis for our long-term planning. We anticipate that interments in the national cemetery system will be increasing over the next two to three decades. The regional concept, which we have now achieved, established a large national cemetery in each of the ten standard Federal regions. This was a major step in improving the geographic distribution of gravesites throughout the United States.

Any expansions of the national cemetery system to meet future requirements, however, should be based primarily on demographic needs. We know from experience that the location of a cemetery has a very significant bearing on how many

veterans will use it. So if we are to build any new cemeteries, it would only make sense to put them where the greatest number of veterans will be served.

Regarding a study of national cemetery needs, my Department has drafted a report along these lines, and it is now at the Office of Management and Budget for their consideration. OMB has indicated that they will be reviewing national cemetery policy in connection with the FY 1986 budget process.

I would like to conclude by commending the citizens of Arizona on the beautiful State veterans cemetery which you have established here in the Phoenix area. The VA is proud to be participating with you in this effort through the State cemetery grants program.

This concludes my statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to be here.

ARIZONA VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION,
Phoenix, AZ, November 7, 1984.

Mr. RICHARD SHELBY,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SHELBY: On behalf of the Arizona Veterans Services Commission and all the veterans of Arizona, I thank you for scheduling this hearing of the Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs, of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, here in Phoenix, Arizona. We are honored by your presence and all the veterans here are hopeful that the Hearing will be an important step in accomplishing a dream that is of over forty years' duration. Mr. Chairman, the veterans of this great State have longed for a national cemetery for well over forty years.

It is my privilege to be one of their spokesmen before this Committee. Many of our great veteran leaders are not here today to address you—they are interred in the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery, the cemetery they spend years of their lives getting established.

The desire has always been for a national cemetery. In the 1970's, when the veterans of Arizona were told that if they established a State veterans cemetery, it would enhance their prospects for a national cemetery, they pressed ahead and convinced the State Legislature and Governor to help them establish the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The Legislature and Governor responded and on March 14, 1979, the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery formally opened. Once the cemetery opened, it seemed the situation changed and the federal authorities seemed to be saying we should be happy with a State veterans cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, the Arizona Veterans Service Commission is charged with the operation of the State veterans cemetery. We do this willingly and gladly to the best of our ability. We are, however, only the caretakers of this cemetery until it comes a national cemetery.

If the veterans of Arizona are united on any one subject, it is the desire for a national cemetery in Arizona. Our veterans have no desire to be buried in Riverside, California, far from their homes and loved ones. Our veterans want to be interred in a national cemetery here in Arizona, where their loved ones can visit their final resting place frequently if they desire, and where their comrades from Arizona can honor their memory on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, or whenever they think of them.

The Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery will, in the immediate future, consist of 225 acres plus an additional 413 acres under lease to be used for expansion of the cemetery.

At the present time, there are 3,655 veterans, spouses and children interred at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix, Arizona.

The cemetery is operated using the same interment rules as the national cemetery system. This was done and is being done to make the transition to a national cemetery as simple a matter as possible.

Arizona's population is expanding rapidly. Our veteran population increases accordingly. Arizona has the largest influx of senior citizens in the United States. The need for a large national cemetery seems evident.

Enclosed is a copy of the master plan for the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

The Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery is open and operating. It would cost the federal government much less to accept this cemetery than to look elsewhere.

Again, on behalf of all Arizona's veterans, thank you for coming here and holding this hearing.

Sincerely,

RICHARD L. COUNTRYMAN,
Director of Veterans Affairs.

INTERMENTS IN THE ARIZONA VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Eligibility: Burial in the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery is authorized under the provisions of State Rules which conform as nearly as possible to the National Cemetery regulations. This bulletin is to acquaint all interested parties with eligibility requirements and procedures for burial in the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Inquiries concerning eligibility should be directed to your AVSC service officers whose addresses and telephone numbers are listed on the last page.

2. Assignment of Space: Interments of eligible decedents will be authorized only when the need arises. Arrangements may be made by telephone (602) 255–3053 with the cemetery superintendent, Mr. Eddie Moreno. One gravesite is authorized for the interment of eligible members of a family unit. When the need arises, grave spaces are assigned in the name of the veteran. It is not necessary to reserve gravesites before needed.

3. Cost for Burial in the Cemetery: There is no charge for the burial of any eligible wartime veteran in the State cemetery; however, the State will claim the plot allowance authorized by the Veterans Administration. Cemetery employees will open and close the grave and will maintain the gravesite. Grave liners or vaults are not required at this time, but are permitted if the family desires one. Arrangements for grave liners must be made with the funeral director. Any expenses incurred by survivors for services and supplies provided by the funeral director of their choice, transportation, and burial vaults if desired, must be paid for from private funds. The fee for burial of an eligible dependent of a veteran is $150 at present. This payment must be made at the time of interment.

4. Burial and Plot Allowance:

a. When the veteran's death occurs on or after October 1, 1981, the $300 basic burial allowance will be payable when a deceased veteran: 1. Was in receipt of pension or compensation (or would have been in receipt of compensation but for the receipt of military retirement pay); 2. Had an original or reopened claim for pension or compensation pending at time of death and has been found entitled to benefits from a date prior to date of death; or, 3. Died while traveling under prior authorization or while properly hospitalized. Claim for this allowance must be filed within two years after permanent burial or cremation.

b. A $300 burial allowance is authorized for unclaimed remains of certain wartime veterans when death occurs after September 30, 1982.

c. A plot allowance not to exceed $150 is provided by the Veterans Administration when burial is not in a National cemetery or other cemetery under the jurisdiction of the United States. In addition to persons defined in the paragraph above for whom the basic burial allowance is payable, eligibility for the plot or interment allowance *onlyl* exists when the veteran: 1. Served during a period of war; or, 2: Was discharged from active duty for (or could have been discharged for) a disability incurred in or aggravated in line of duty.

c. The Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery will claim the plot allowance direct from the Veterans Administration.

d. Cost of transportation of the veteran's remains to the State cemetery may be allowed if the veteran dies of a service connected cause or was receiving compensation at the time of death (or would have been in receipt of compensation but for receipt of military retirement pay or pension). Additional cost of transporting the remains may be allowed if the veteran died while hospitalized or domiciled at VA expense, or died while traveling with prior authorization and VA expense to or from a hospital or domiciliary or other location for examination, treatment or care.

e. Disposition of remains and transportation costs for an eligible dependent of a veteran must be paid from private funds by survivors.

f. A person who dies on active military duty is entitled to certain services and allowances from the armed forces. Specific information is obtainable from the responsible arm of the military service. Veterans Service Officers will provide assistance in obtaining this benefit.

5. Arranging for Interment in the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery:

a. The person making the interment arrangements for an eligible decedent should communicate with the superintendent of the State cemetery. At present, the telephone number is (602) 255–3053. The name of the veteran, together with rank, serial number, social security number, date and place of entry into service, date and place of separation from service, character of discharge, branch of service, date and place of birth and date of death should be furnished. This information is needed in order to prepare the interment paperwork and to facilitate establishing eligibility for the decedent. This information will not be disclosed outside State Veterans Service Commission and VA personnel. The superintendent may set a tentative date for interment pending verification of service, and prompt notification will be given the application when the burial is authorized. It is recommended that the time and date for interment not be announced and that the decedent not be transported to the State cemetery until the superintendent has confirmed the burial arrangements. This also applies to the delivery of cremains to the cemetery. Casketed and cremated remains are presently interred in gravesites pending the construction of a columbarium. (The receptacle containing cremains may be personally brought to the State cemetery or sent by parcel post or express, addressed to Arizona Vetrans Memorial Cemetery, Box 13750, Cave Creek Stage, Phoenix, Arizona 85020.)

b. In the event that the spouse or dependent child predeceases an active duty service member or a veteran, burial in the State cemetery may be authorized on the basis of a statement signed by the active service member or veteran indicating that he or she elects to be buried in the same cemetery as the dependent and that it is the intent of the active duty service member or veteran to be interred in the same gravesite. The agreement form will be furnished by the superintendent of the cemetery.

6. Rendition of Military Honors: Funeral directors will normally assist survivors in obtaining military honors. While the rendition of military honors is not a part of the State Cemetery Program, military personnel and veterans may be interred with military honors. The superintendent is not authorized to assume the responsibility for military honors; however, he will assist survivors in obtaining such honors. This is done through a committee composed of volunteers from many veterans organizations in Arizona. This committee may be contacted through the cemetery superintendent at (602) 255–3053.

7. Location: The cemetery is located approximately 17 miles from downtown Phoenix. The address is 23029 N. Cave Creek Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85024. Arrangements may be made directly with the superintendent by calling (602) 255–3053. The cemetery is located in the vicinity of Cave Creek Road and Pinnacle Peak Road in Phoenix. Hours of operation are from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm Monday through Friday (holidays excepted). The cemetery is open for visitations on weekends and holidays.

II. PERSONS ENTITLED TO INTERMENT

1. Veterans and Members of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard): Any member of the Armed Forces of the United States dying on active duty; any citizen of the United States who, during any war in which the United States has been or may hereafter be engaged, whose service terminated honorably by death or otherwise, and who was a citizen of the United States at the time of entry in such service and at the time of death; or any veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable (undesirable, bad conduct or other than honorable discharges may or may not qualify depending upon a special determination, made by the Administrator of Veterans Affairs based on the facts of each case, as to whether the veteran was separated from service under "dishonorable" or "other than dishonorable" conditions).

2. Members of Reserve Components: Any member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard or the Reserve Officers Training Corps of the Army, Navy or Air Force who dies under honorable conditions while serving on active duty for training or performing full-time service. Certain members of these organizations who die while hospitalized or undergoing treatment at the expense of the United States for injury or disease contracted or incurred under honorable conditions while performing that duty or service or traveling to or from that duty or service may also be eligible.

3. Commissioned Officers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: Certain Commissioned Officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (formerly titled the Coast and Geodetic Survey).

4. Public Health Service: Certain Commissioned Officers of the Regular or Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service who served on full-time duty on or after July 29, 1945. If the service of the particular Public Health Service officer falls

within the meaning of active duty for training, as defined in section 101(22) of title 38, United States Code, his or her death must have resulted from a disease or injury or aggravated in line of duty.

5. The spouse, widow, or widower of an eligible active duty member or veteran who is buried in the State cemetery or agrees to burial in the State cemetery at time of death. Also the widow or widower of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States lost or buried at sea or officially determined to be permanently absent in a status of missing or missing in action. In the event of the remarriage of an otherwise eligible widow, eligibility for burial with her first husband is lost. However, should she become divorced or her subsequent husband(s) predecease her, she may regain her eligibility but she must be interred under the name of her first husband.

6. Minor children of an eligible active duty member or veteran. For purposes of burial in the State cemetery, a minor child is a person who is unmarried and who is under the age of 18 years.

7. Unmarried adult children of eligible active duty members or veterans are eligible if they become permanently incapable of self-support because of physical or mental disability before attaining the age of 18 years. The interment of every adult child must be approved by the Director of Veterans Affairs. Request for authority to make the burial should be submitted at the time of death to the superintendent of the cemetery, accompanied by (a) statement of the decedent's marital status; (b) a statement of the degree of dependence; and (c) a statement of an attending physician about the nature and duration of the physical and/or mental disability.

8. The flat bronze marker is the only type of marker authorized for use at gravesites. Special areas have been designated for monuments and memorials which may be erected to honor decedents.

Veterans are encouraged to notify someone of their desire to be interred in the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Please be advised that the cemetery is still under construction and much of the planned landscaping has not yet been completed. Interments, however, are being conducted and visits to the gravesites are permitted on weekends and holidays.

Arizona Veterans Service Commission offices are located as follows:

Arizona Veterans Service Commission, 700 W. Campbell, Suite 12, Phoenix, Arizona 85012, Tel: (602) 255-4183.

Arizona Veterans Service Commission, 379 Malpais Lane, Suite #3, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001, Tel: (602) 779-4166.

Arizona Veterans Service Commission, 416 W. Congress, Room 191, Tucson, Arizona 85701, Tel: (602) 628-5388.

Arizona Veterans Service Commission, 1700 S. 1st Ave, Suite 107, Yuma, Arizona 85364, Tel: (602) 783-8386.

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INTRODUCTION

The State of Arizona authorized the development of a parcel of land, as designated in State Senate Bill 1188, to be used for a veterans' cemetery. This action was approved by Govenror Castro on June 27, 1976. This legislative enactment establishes Arizona as one of the first states having an active program of this nature, preceded only by Maine and Maryland. The eventual intent is to have the site established as a national cemetery for the burial of veterans and their dependents.

The National Cemetery System of the U.S. Veterans Administration has provided their assistance in helping to develop this program. Recognition should also be extended to the Arizona Veterans Memorial Joint Committee, Inc., the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The Master Development Plan for 836.34 acres prescribes the transformation of raw desert land into a national shrine that is intended to project human dimension in a beautiful permanent way, and then allow the native beauty of the desert in its many botanical forms to assume a natural state of visual and educational value.

The slightly rolling terrain of a desert plain, dissected by intermittent washes with vistas of mountains near and far, best describes this site. The undeveloped land, if planned with care and good judgment, will become a cemetery of unusual charm and appeal, and still provide a burial area with between 300,000 to 500,000 internments, depending upon the burial methods used.

A preliminary study of physiographic characteristics, drainage, vegetation, and soils has been prepared and will become a permanent part of the development plan. An analysis of needs, phases of development, vehicular access and movement, and of utilities has also been made.

DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATIVE OBJECTIVES

To develop a national shrine that will fittingly commemorate those who have served our country.

To provide those facilities necessary for administration of the cemetery and related services, and provide facilities for visitors, memorial services, special events, passive recreation and patriotic appeal.

To preserve the natural desert environment and microclimate amenities of the site, including existing vegetation, drainage ways and topography, and when disturbed, restore in kind when feasible.

To develop a national cemetery concept on the heritage, tradition and climate of the Southwest, and maintain a consistency of architectural expression throughout the cemetery.

To promote the awareness of the cemetery, its heritage and its facilites, to gravesite visitors, school groups, veterans, local communities, and the community at large, for its enjoyment.

To develop the cemetery in an orderly manner and create a sense of continuity, both visually and functionally.

To control costs of maintenance and operational functions.

To establish maintenance and administrative facilities which can be responsive to the change in needs of the overall cemetery site, and which can expand to meet those needs as the cemetery grows towards its ultimate size.

To establish a circulation system that is functional and separates vehicular, pedestrian, service and maintenance traffic.

To create a strong system of internal buffers and screening elements; to screen all incompatible visual elements; to promote the amenities of the site and, within the framework of the basic character of the site, create space sequences that are interesting and dramatic.

To create a sense of human scale and privacy for gravesite visitors.

To establish a strong sense of entry into the cemetery.

To establish a series of reference points within the cemetery to orient the visitor.

To encourage those uses adjacent to the cemetery that will complement and support the administrative and aesthetic functions of the cemetery.

PHASED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The purpose of the Phased Development Plan is to provide an administrative tool for the future development and maintenance of the cemetery. The plan should also be used to determine how, when, and where capital improvements are to be made. It should be anticipated that the Phased Development Plan is to be reviewed annually to determine if program objectives are being met and resources properly allocated

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and projected for eventual development of the cemetery master plan as conceived. A high degree of flexibility is intended to exist between various phases in order to accommodate a variety of burial needs and attach these needs to appropriate phases. For example, a garden columbarium and/or mausoleum is contemplated for each phase except phases three and twelve. These facilities can be shared between phases. The location and construction of most access roads is designed to be associated with the development of a given phase, but this should not prevent higher class access roads being constructed during an earlier phase of development.

Phase 1—Phase 1 is the initial development of the cemetery and represents a minimum area for "start up" operations for the location of the first graves and means of gaining access to the site. A minimum 12.63 acres with access road of 4.70 miles from Cave Creek Road is sufficient to begin development. However, some additional improvements may need to be achieved by an application to place improvements under the present lease. The access right of way is to be obtained from Cave Creek Road and graded with gravel. An oval drive is provided for return access. A temporary residential mobile home and separate office unit is essential and can be moved on site adjacent to the main access road. A 30 x 50 foot steel building with a fenced enclosure should be purchased to act as a shop and storage area for equipment and materials. The metal unit is programmed for another site under phase three. However, access easements and lease improvement may be desirable to locate the structure in its permanent location. Construction should begin on the front entrance and 1200 linear feet of six-foot high chain link fence on the west boundary associated with the main entrance. The rest of the perimeter under phase one is intended to be enclosed in a three strand barbed wire fence. The first water well is to be drilled, unless municipal water can be furnished to the site and a drainage control and water retention pool constructed. The first facilities construction under this phase should consist of the main entrance, the flag plaza, the chapel, and first personage burial area west and east of the chapel. Approximately 5,100 conventional grave sites are to be provided along with the initial construction of 2,000 crypt garden wall type columbarium. A native planting screen is to begin along the boundary perimeter and be continued as various phases about the boundary line. A three year period may be needed to complete the construction part of this phase.

Phase 2—Phase 2 is designed to make maximum use of the facilities established under phase one. During this phase the first 2,500 unit garden columbarium and mausoleum is to be started and is intended to be expandable if public demand for this type of facility increases. The third drainage control and water retention pool is to be constructed, as is paving of all roads established in phases one and two. An additional 3,000 linear feet of boundary fence is to be constructed. Some landscape culture work will need to begin during this phase. The area for conventional burials would be 16,600 additional plots. An eighteen month construction phase should be anticipated.

Phase 3—Phase 3 is a major construction and land acquisition phase. Work that is begun in this phase may need to be extended into phases four and five before they are completed. Construction of major facilities consist of: (1) the first wing of the administration and reception center, (2) superintendent's residence, (3) amphitheater, (4) roads, (5) primary maintenance area, (6) chapel memorial gardens, (7) landscaping, (8) and relocation of the APS 67 KV powerline. The steel maintenance building, if located on a temporary basis under phase one, is to be removed and an additional made to begin the primary maintenance facility. Easements should be obtained for the entire boundary fencing and interior circular drive road and other major circulation roads are to be paved as rapidly as practical to confine traffic to these roads and preserve the native desert landscape. The fencing of a major portion of the boundary should be considered necessary during this phase to limit undesirable dumping and offroad vehicle use. The high flag circle pole should be erected and the platform and seating built for the amphitheater. An enclosed area for temporary storage of nursery materials moved during construction or development of burial areas should be established during this phase. The ornamental landscape areas should begin around buildings, memorials and the central axis road where public traffic is anticipated to create heavier use than normal surface desert landscape will tolerate. Passive recreation activities of walking, picnicking, driving and viewing should be anticipated and encouraged in intensity during this phase. A second water well may need to be drilled to start the supply of water to the amphitheater and flag circle areas. An estimated additional 14,500 conventional burial plots could be provided during this phase.

STATEMENT OF KAY COMPTON, DEPARTMENT COMMANDER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

As the Department Commander of the American Legion of Arizona, I am proud to be invited to testify at this Hearing.

The American Legion is the largest veterans organization in the State of Arizona. Our members have labored long and hard for the establishment of a national cemetery in Arizona. We have invested countless hours and many thousands of dollars in this effort.

I believe our efforts are a matter of record with our Arizona Congressional delegates, that for over 40 years this matter has been one of our highest priorities. Together with the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Arizona veterans have lobbied year after year for a national cemetery.

At the time of the establishment of the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix, it was our understanding that that was the first step towards the establishment of a national cemetery. That is why we have been so insistent that the cemetery operate with the same rules as the national cemetery system. We are pleased that the Arizona Veterans Service Commission is presently operating the cemetery. We are even more pleased that they openly say that they are "caretakers" of that cemetery until it attains national status.

Mr. Chairman, this issue cannot be laid to rest until the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery is a national cemetery.

I do thank you for coming here to Arizona for this Hearing and for inviting the American Legion to testify.

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